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outposts

33

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TOM WRIGHT

Frontier Guard

THE barbed wire is erected and the guns deployed.
The guard patrols with winter's lead weighting his feet
and darkness is his enemy as it is mine.
The rifle on his shoulder could hail out my death
or summon his should he forget I did not call him
from his warm moonfaced Ninotchka
to this check-point where the wind ignores his challenge
and makes free with zones and frontiers,
and ice aches along his veins.
The darkness is our mutual foe. My stiff bones groan
and grumble as the cold salts my old wounds and his.
And my Ninotchka is no nearer;
she would weep as much should I personify my hate
in him and blaze it on the deadness of the night.

I could call out to him as brother, tovarich,
or friend; tell him I too have crucified my God,
and have been crucified, that what he hates I hate,
or simply that the darkness is our enemy.
But he would only hear an ambush in my voice.
For we are isolated and expendable,
making our separate tracks on the same snow,
divided, conquered by the dark that seals us in.
Ice smokes our breath with malice and the trumpet tongue
of fear musters a monster up behind the wire,
and I am his monster as he is mine.

We, whom our common isolation should unite,
stamp, blow, but cannot generate a common thaw,
nor furnish common law to meet our common cause,
nor wrest a common summer from the earth.
The ice attacks us and the darkness separates.
Only our challenge dares to cross the frontier line.

ROY FULLER

A Blank Page

BY accident I left this notebook page
Blank. What an opportunity is here
To foil the usual and average
Verse that, dismayed, I always see appear!

Now might be set down all my life and brain
Prevented: words like "majesty" and "whore";
Themes to light up the age; an endless train
Of huge personae drenched in scent and gore;

And a dread plot to give the sense that we
Till now have never grasped the sickening
Fact of our dated life's calamity,
Hung at the breast of this immortal thing.

The drama would be played with smiling lips,
Gross suture of a noble furrowed face—
The hand that drives the dagger also grips
The thighs of the proconsul's swart disgrace.

Nor could it fail to show what history
Tells the degenerate times: the dissident
Truth cowardice perverts and which would free
The force that slumbers in the tenement.

An aged man who troubles to arrange
For a child his withered muscles in a grin,
Youth effortlessly making that weird change
Of trashy food to alabaster skin—

Such common touches that my too austere,
Self-conscious Muse has never dared before
Will on this democratic page make clear
The kinship of the people and the lore.

This page! Already it is nearly full
And looking back, alas, I see again
Only the poem on the poem, null
Seed of a small pen in a troubled reign.

EDWIN BROCK

A Kind of Grace

THE ways of God are various and slow:
Like rust the habits congregate and cling:
We learn by doing what we need to know.

The smaller days smooth down our flesh and show
The smoother bone in which temptations bring
The ways of God which vary and are slow.

Still in the morning's rising I will grow,
Like someone murdered, from a martyr's dream
And learn by doing what I need to know.

But when will love's beginning throw
To this time-tempered fugue the theme?
The ways of God are various and slow.

I have seen sailors scrape their sides to show
The shattered rib beneath the musselled beam
And learn by doing what they need to know;

And still the ship was worthy, felt the flow
Of water wearing out along its seam
And seemed to learn by doing what to know:
The ways of God are various and slow.

GEORGE MACBETH

The Leaning Tower

HER white accessories enrich the green.
On Roman arches, elegantly light,
Forewarned by sunset of the changing scene,
Her pillars pirouette to face the night.
The tower bows, encouraged by her site.

Oblique, not perpendicular, in poise,
No models match the gravity her tilt
(The "sweet disorder" that each stone deploys)
Adds to a classic beauty. She was built
Quite vertical, but thought it *chic* to wilt.

7 1

Now pride of Pisa, did she make her name
By leaning out, when Galileo dropped
Those crucial weights, to help his law to fame?
No story tells; too cautious to adopt
A good foundation, her decline has stopped.

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH

The Russian Choir Sings in a Cathedral

THERE, against the cathedral's understatement
Of sepia stone, its reticent arches lifting
Like shoulders in deprecation, a choir of men
Stretches like a screen between us and the golden
Mystery of the altar. They are hewn shafts
Of Purbeck marble in their black surplices.
Pale faces are turned towards us. Then, black and gold
The dark notes twist between the tenor's fire,
Faith and despair painting an Ikon of sound,
Barbaric and splendid echo of Byzantium.

Exiles, they have no country. And we, the listeners,
Which is our country? Here, in these ribs of stone
That ring like a trumpet, shudder like a ship
In the lips of the gale, we, too, have touched the golden
Shore from which we are exiles. And in pity
From the grave order and sequence of their music
Stoops the Mother. A Child radiant as a sunflower
Reigning upon her breast. His hand in blessing
Lifts, and its shadow falls across our faces
In the dark and the gold that is the Cross of God.

MABEL FERRETT

Pisgah

COME from beneath the desiccated sky,
Over hot desert, past the jutted peak
Of scalding outcrop, following by day
The tantalising cloudlet and the freak
Fire by night he, Moses, led the band
Of hawk-faced seekers to the promised land.

Further he could not go. He had been old
To father such a folk from Sinai,
Binding them with the tablets of the law.
Forty years more had wept his eyeballs dry,
Pitted his cheeks with sand and left their trace
Carving the wadi's granite through his face.

Searching the scene from Gilead to Zoar,
Turning from Pisgah to the utmost sea
With all Naphtali and the southern plain
And Jericho's high-palmed periphery,
Did not his gaunt mind's scaffold crack at last
Remembering Egypt a green century past?

PARIS LEARY

Entropy

WE hardly noticed, the day it all began.
Some things started before others—sun-dials
first,
then phonographs, the movies; the electric fan
seemed less effective; but the worst

we noticed in the beginning was that love
took longer and longer each time, with good-byes
like visits, and the clocks too tired to move.
But soon the fact became apparent: eyes

seemed sleepier than before, and traffic slowed
until it scarcely moved at all, and soon,
music unwound into a lengthier mode
and no one could quite carry a tune.

It was hard on the children, to stay six or ten,
and long engagements were, of course, absurd.
Only the poets were unaffected—men
who always had been slow and had preferred

to wait to catch a meaning in slow-motion
or isolate a moment from its brothers.
So when the airplanes hung immobile and the
ocean
held ships and fish like jelly, and the others

found stop-lights never changed from Stop to Go,
the poets roared like rockets, flashed like light,
and finally, moved so fast—or we so slow—
they disappeared entirely from our sight.

But father says that when the wind is good,
you sometimes hear them laughing as they pass
as if they mean to say, "We understood,
we always knew". Is that what poetry was?

F. PRATT GREEN

Spastics

WALKING home afterwards, I am struck
By the lane's stillness in mid-December,
The muffled elms and ghostly hemlock.

Movement there is. A friendly mongrel
Trots by with loose gait; a wood-pigeon
Panics from a tree. This is rational;

And were a wind to blow its head off
In apple-orchards, scattering branches,
This, too, would be natural enough,

For nature does everything with ease,
Even her worst. It is our humanity
Begets the nightmare children, these

Hostages to the uncontrollable flesh,
Who risk themselves like lovable clowns
On their tight-rope lives with a rash

Courage. Watching, we have to confess
We move here like a mole in daylight.
Are we not all children of darkness?—

As was Brueghel that day he painted
His group of moronic peg-leg cripples,
Pity not being the effect he wanted.

Waving for the last time, I am shaken
By a wasteful and misdirected anger
Against something which is itself broken.

W. H. BOORE

Meeting Place

THE sea on the pebble beach
through its white beard mumbles
and time is the far reach
where the day's dust crumbles.

And age is that cold eye
remorseless and unwinking
restless, palsied, sly
beneath the motion sinking.

And youth, as soft as air
remotely hesitating,
stands in the shadows where
old earth is waiting.

GORDON HARRIS

A Snapshot

CAUGHT in the frame of autumn
Irresolute you stand,
The last gesture of summer
Is flowering in your hand.

Above you startled branches
Shake their leaves away,
More than the sun your faithfulness
Revives the flagging day.

And wind that scattered wild words
Shouting down the past
Is stilled by your compassion
For the flower that cannot last.

But I would always have it so,
Let the word rage, let time blow,
Let the flower to your likeness grow.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

Invocation

UNATTACHED, unknown,
No tents here, no tepid springs at evening
Nor disasters indeed either. Only the cool
Space, the vacuum waiting, the hour defended
Against wasted minutes, the grotto (if there was a grotto)
Shattered. Here if you come you must
Rebuild yourself from beginnings, forget your birthright
For there is nothing here to pass on or pass down.

Some will dig with steady spades, some
Eager for aeons of silence will pray
Unpossessively. Others will probe to a pride
Furnished by finishing some simple task. The lyric hour
Among selected minutes will be lived.
Choosing is all. Choice will breed love.

And remember also,
The place, the season chooses you out, you
Choose where the choice claims you, where the time
Dances though you are still, where the night
(Difficult still for the senses) seeps to your mind.
But fingers also find meanings, eyes can scan and sever
Landscape or lover. Crisis is with you always;
You are a craftsman among
Distance and silence; praying is more than possessing,
Succumbing can also be choosing. Look, now
You are firm-footed, swift-fingered, your eyes are
enchaining,
Clasping and shaping this space
And the chime of each hour is falling about your ears.

LOUIS NEWMAN

Open Your Winter Door

I KNOCKED and knocked
but they wouldn't listen.
I had news to tell them,
I've been around and have seen
the living and the dead
naked bones, the smell of worms.
I have been here long I tell you,
observed the fly entangled in the web.

Open your winter door
and see for yourself how the frost
gathers on the stubborn rock,
solid, in a vast sea of lies,
behind the Chinese Wall and play
children's games of matched words
and draw pictures of a perennial April.

You, prophets of the stars,
with minds invested in the skies,
have you read the news these last
two thousand years of grass sleep
in the hungry grave?

U.S.A.

LANDRETH E. LEAPER

The Burning Wind

"quo numine laeso"

WHILE the voices and winds burn we shall live.
They will flame with fringes of shadow.
They will enchant the listening hour,
listening to lines the colour of Virgil.
As, in the first of all summers, the light

and the trembling landscape and the trembling sky
seemed an intoxication of echoes, infinitely
woven between birth, and death, and the rose
which lived the fantasy of roses; just like these
will all the countryside awaken again. We shall see
the wounded histories re-open, as children
search the calendar for tongues of crystal and gold.
We shall see our sciences penetrated by angels
who bring kisses, with the perfume of summer, and with
the opaque adolescence of the clinging girl.
Now in the intervening labyrinth we move.
With our eyes we understand the dying heaven
And all its affectionate horizons. In our hearts
We hold the numinous rhythms of words.
The lips and their blurred impression
reflect a shadowed fragrance, a darkened pulse
that is only traced in the rose of division.
Here annaic elegies give their silent peace.

ERIC A. PFEIFFER

For Dylan Thomas

UNAFRAID of love on the heroned shore
with daring you went near the water.
Nothing,
nor silence nor light stood still,
like a top you drove
words and vision before you,
driving the women mad and men—
their quick tripping wit—into silence.

They are still spinning,
words in the wind still spinning;
the sand you would think might stop them
or the waves of your own Welsh sea.
And look:
They are still spinning. *U.S.A.*

M. O. DENCH

Bosham Church

THE church was old in Norman times,
Weathered as now, with shingled tower
And long-cut stones;
Sheltering the innocent bones
Of Canute's daughter;
A landmark yet for harbour men
Whose lateen sails come homing
On the light inshore wind.

It stands aloof in ancient peace,
Deaf to the threatening whine of Jets,
And to the distance-muted knell
Of the lightship in the mist;
But hearing in the hush of night
Its own lost tenor bell.

FRANCIS NEWBOLD

The Others

CITIZENS of another universe,
They question us with hieroglyphic eyes:
The Otherness of women is our curse.

Do they truly like our act, admire our verse?
Do they know us to be fools—or think us wise?
Citizens of another universe,

They are our audience; for them we rehearse
Our tight-wire stunts, display our merchandise;
The Otherness of women is our curse.

They live with us, for better or for worse,
Yet in the bed are strangers in disguise;
Citizens of another universe

Smile on our cradle, weep upon our hearse,
Whose tears and laughter may be truth or lies:
The Otherness of women is our curse.

They wear the masks of mother, lover, nurse—
Who can know friend from foe? How recognize
Citizens of another universe?
The Otherness of women is our curse.

ROBIN SKELTON

The Cotton Dress

LOVE in a cotton dress.
No steadfastness
of star or Philomel
or thorn-spurred rose
red in the darkness,
but this happiness
walking as simply
as shadows down the road
no symphony attends
or lurking Troy.
It would be moving
if not commonplace,
such casual mastery
letting them dismiss,
as we dare not,
the dark, the loneliness.

WILLIAM PILLIN

Nihilist

ONE day his wordless urge for love was gone;
and blackly, silently, the night destroyed
all kindly beacons in the lampless void.
He saw all things as lumpish pulp and stone,
as foam and frenzy. And he was alone.

"Then all the shining ghosts are in my skull?"
This damning thought erases blue from skies
and steals the radiance from Astarte's eyes.
He staggers blindly, wall to leaning wall,
in chaos of appearances and lies

where nothing has the stance of permanence.
The landscapes, buildings, all dissolve and flow
like Dali's watches melting on a bough.
Without design the mad electrons dance
through air divested of angelic glow.

And in the barely breathing night he knew
that God had left the world! Loudly he flung
a summons to the stars. No echoes rung.
The night was silent, silent. And he too
was silent with his cosmic sense of wrong.

Here, where all things dissolve into a mist,
the soulless manikins grotesquely rush,
absurdly chatter, procreate and clash.
The world convulses in his raging fist!
His face is dark; and dark his final wish.

U.S.A.

JOHN SMITH

Child and Man

WHY should your innocent eyes accuse?
What secret wrong do they uncover?
My crimes are hidden well; I know
No adult gaze corrupt as mine
Might the curled lie within my heart discover.

But do not think the deed will out.
Child, through your innocence you are hurled
By that pure knowledge of my sin
Into the sin of knowledge; so
You slip from grace into my wicked world.

It is Life's fearful paradox
That by your inocence you should sow
The seeds of guilt that rank as weeds
Over your spirit's Eden must
Tangle their filth and fast as bindweed grow.

Pitiful child. Too soon you learn
The complex truth of Man's despair.
How may your piping tongue betray
My crime now we accomplice are?
For by your inoocence you my guilt must share.

Oh if I could by that same token
Walk in your innocent world as well
Till good and bad were cancelled quite
Then might we celebrate at last
On simple earth the marriage of Heaven and Hell.

LEONARD CLARK

Wandering Homeless

REACH back into memory's haze,
Pull apart its curtain,
Head down, bruise the heart's remembered hours,
Fingers crossed, step into infancy. . . .

There is that field again with trees
Ambushed on the skyline; that plough,
With broken handles still rusting in the last trench,
A hedge wild with tangling rose,
The same army of bees foraging in dust and dew;
And there, beyond the soundless gate,
The sweet ivied house, with a solitary cow
Bellowing to be let loose into the milky night.
But she I came for all this way,
With troubles enough on my back,
Not there to welcome me with childhood's word,
Not there fluttering the hens to bed in the end barn,
Laying the peaceful apples to rest in the loft,
Not there to say a good-night on the stair.
And if I turn around,
Come back unwillingly into Time's now,
Time's now to nullify,
I know that I shall find
Beyond the reach of prayers
A kingdom of the blind,
And every sound wandering homeless in unfriendly air.

Green With Beasts: W. S. Merwin (Rupert Hart-Davis, 10s. 6d.).
Night Thoughts: David Gascoyne (Andre Deutsch, 10s. 6d.).
Dance Without Shoes: William Pillin (Golden Quill Press, U.S.A., $2.50).

MR. MERWIN'S handsomely produced collection is divided into three parts, the first of which is a kind of bestiary containing five poems on various creatures. Of these I find the last two, *Dog* and *White Goat, White Ram,* the most effective, but the group as a whole, despite the archaic inversions and the use of a form based on Anglo-Saxon alliterative metre, is oddly prosy and lacking in tension. They read, as do many of the other verses in this book, like academic exercises.

Indeed, Mr. Merwin is a cloistered poet, and one is usually conscious of the shadow of his tutor on the page: Robert Frost looms large over *The Mountain* and *Burning the Cat* and it is probably significant that one of the more deeply realised pieces is called *Learning a Dead Language.* His chief virtues are the gift for creating striking visual images and a scholarly respect for language, and in *The Station, The Master,* and a lovely short poem in the third part called *The Fishermen,* he shows definite signs of an original and sensitive talent. But one cannot escape the conviction that he writes too much, and probably reads too much, nor help feeling that the Poetry Book Society must have been pretty pushed when they made this collection their choice.

Night Thoughts, as the reader will probably know, is the text of the work commissioned by the Third Programme and, after reading it, one is tempted to ask all sorts of questions, the discussion of which has no place in a short review. Yet it is impossible to ignore the fact that Mr. Gascoyne was writing for the ear, not the eye, and this has had effects both salutary and the reverse on his work. *Night Thoughts* gains by achieving a far greater lucidity than we have been conditioned to expect of Mr. Gascoyne's poetry, but the necessity for establishing instant and explicit communication has robbed much of his writing of its subtlety. Despite some splendid and haunting passages one wonders whether this is a poem at all, and if not, what exactly is it? Certainly, it must have been wonderful to listen to, and I hope profoundly that the broadcast will be repeated soon.

Mr. Pillin is much easier to handle than the first two poets for his strengths and weaknesses are equally assertive. Like the late Roy Campbell he writes with great zest, laying on the paint thick and employing rather mechanical measures with treacherous

facility. He frequently throws off effective conceits: "My throat feels terror like a swallowed bruise", and his statements are always coherent and complete. But he obviously lacks the gift of self-criticism and he lets such embarrassing clichés get by as: "April's vernal breast", "Atilla's bestial leer" and "The blue amazement of her eyes".

As one begins to read them the poems seem charming, and one is tolerant of their lack of rhythmic invention, their sentimentality and bombast, but very soon they begin to pall like second-rate romantic music, or chocolate fudge, and finally the digestion rebels.

VERNON SCANNELL.

The Trial of Thomas Cranmer: Anne Ridler (Faber, 10s. 6d.).
Fire in Heaven: Dannie Abse (Hutchinson, 8s. 6d.).
The True Mistery of the Nativity: James Kirkup (O.U.P., 5s.).

THESE three plays between them manifest some of the strength and more of the weakness of modern poetic drama. The influence of Eliot is clear and sensible, only to be counteracted by other less useful idiosyncrasies. So few writers have chosen to go back, as they should, to *Sweeney Agonistes* and Auden's *Dance of Death,* preferring to tail on after *Murder in the Cathedral,* cashing in on the ready-made church audience.

Take Anne Ridler, first. Here is a straightforward, honest-to-God representation of the last days of Cranmer; without mistiness either of tears or woolly thinking; in good puritan lowest-common-multiple verse. Performed at Oxford on the very day on the very spot, it was probably broadly moving and effective. To read, it continually misses the target. The first words of the Witness (an ambiguous character, sometimes of the 16th century sometimes of the 20th), "Have you ever stood by at a martyrdom?" are as banal as the last words of Margaret Cranmer, "in the knowledge of this, his happy ending". The facts are valuable, but verse-drama needs more than fact.

Dannie Abse does his best to reach the real theatre, away from church audiences and humdrum and holy verse, by means of rhetoric, obliquity, symbolism and the suffering in the historical present. There is heavy hard meaning behind the tense lines of almost every speech. Yet the final feeling is not one which should arise from good verse-drama—one is left with amateurish gesturing, surprising in a poet whose other work has been so accomplished and purposeful. The doubt crops up early in Act 1. As soon as Ruth says: "It seems to control our destiny, doesn't it?", one

realises that the right synthesis has not been achieved : the bridge has not been built between rhetoric and fact.

In 1452 Arnoul Greban (who probably never heard of Villon) had a key made at his own expense in order to ransack the Library of Notre Dame for his backgrounds and precedents for his plays. In 1956 James Kirkup has had the use of several keys (see Preface, Acknowledgments, Note on Music) and has produced a kind of timely prototype play in higgledly-piggledly verse, which the sentimental amateur may stage with the usual amount of pawkiness, gawkiness, mawkishness and religious sugar-icing. It is not quite clear what Mr. Kirkup has hoped to do. If this is the "reproduction" of a Mediaeval French Play, why the modern slang, why the pantomime animals, why the hotch-potch of music from Martin Shaw, Vivaldi, carols, etc.? (Greban surely composed his own music?). If this is merely another Nativity Play, why bother about Grebans or translations at all?

HUGH CREIGHTON HILL.

Best Poems of 1955, Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards of 1956 (Stanford University Press, U.S.A., $3.50).

SINCE the first publication in the series, the anthologies sponsored by Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards have improved in quality year by year, though the general standard has always been commendable . It is significant that, with the appearance of the eighth annual volume, the title should be changed to *Best Poems* of the particular year in which the selection was made. For it can now, with real justification, be claimed that this volume contains the best poems which have been printed in magazines of the English-speaking world, and that it is truly representative of both British and American poets. With this issue the Borestone Mountain yearly anthology takes its rightful place as one of the most important and authoritative compilations to be published in these days. The Editor-in-Chief, Robert T. Moore, and his Advisory Editors, Lionel Stevenson, Hildegarde Flanner, Frances Minturn Howard, Gertrude Claytor and Howard Sergeant (a newcomer to the Editorial Board) are to be congratulated on their success in achieving what must have been the original aim of the sponsors.

The first prize of $300 goes to Eric Barker for his moving and evocative poem *In Memory of Dylan Thomas:*

> "Let us go down to the shore and look for shells
> That gather sea-news for the sad at heart,
> For he was always faithful to his name
> And would return to where all memories start.

And wait, above the gull cries and the bells,
From moony acres where his sail outroved
All fins and swimmers breaking the seven seas,
For tidings of the great voice lost and loved . . .".

The second prize has been awarded to Frances Frost for her *Poem for Sky-Watchers,* and it is especially pleasing to find that Adrienne Cecile Rich, who has given serious competition to the prizewinners in the two previous collections, has taken third place this year with *Allhallows' Eve,* which ends on the following note:

"Stay home tonight from haunting,
Since men to men now are
More ghostlike than the ghostly,
And feel that breath all year
That once blew on Allhallows'
In the innocence of fear".

There are excellent poems by W. H. Auden, John Ciardi, Robert P. Tristram Coffin, Leah Bodine Drake, Robert Frost, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, W. S. Merwin, Howard Moss, Marcia Masters Schmid and Richard Wilbur from the other side of the Atlantic. Amongst the British poets whose work is included are Dannie Abse, Thomas Blackburn, John Heath-Stubbs, Elizabeth Jennings, Norman MacCaig, Louis MacNeice, Thomas Moult, Burns Singer and Margaret Stanley-Wrench and their poems lose nothing by comparison with those of their American counterparts. One of the best of the British contributions is *At the British War Cemetery, Bayeux,* by Charles Causley (taken from *The London Magazine*):

"About your easy heads my prayers
I said with syllables of clay.
What gift, I asked, shall I bring now
Before I weep and walk away?

Take, they replied, the oak and laurel.
Take our fortune of tears and live
Like a spendthrift lover. All we ask
Is the one gift you cannot give."

To judge by this anthology, 1955 was a good year for poetry.

JOHN SEYMOUR.

PAMPHLET COLLECTIONS

Make Me a Mandrake: Dorothy Stringer (Outposts Publications, 2s. 6d.).
No Bold Comfort: W. H. Petty (Outposts Publications, 2s. 6d.).
Dragon's Teeth: Jack Bevan (The Guild Press, 3s. 6d.).
Stances and Distances: Cid Corman (Migrant Books, 3s. 6d.).

WHAT a pleasure it is to come across a poet who works well within the limitations of her own poetry and experience and refuses to sentimentalise or over-dramatise her material. Such a poet is Miss Stringer whose verses, dealing with specific experiences and events—hospital scenes, a music-hall comedian, the Coronation—record their impact upon her sensibility with disciplined passion, and relate them to the wider context of contemporary life. Sometimes her attack is frontal where it should be oblique, as in *Comedian* where the "Gestapo" in the lines: "Ridges about his screwed-up eyes Tell of Gestapo horror", is too limiting, too precise, but her disgust with certain aspects of the human condition is always tempered with charity and compassion.

Mr. Petty, too, does not aim beyond his reach, and his reflections on art, life and death, and his evocations of landscapes have a classic simplicity and dignity. His diction is fastidious and exact, and each of these short poems is constructed with care and unobtrusive craftsmanship. The last line of *Market* with its three terse monosyllables that jolt the reader into a state of compelled empathy is a highly effective device: "So the high sun brings all things here to pattern/Even the hot cattle amiably/Ambling beneath the buxom-windowed shops/To curt death". Neither he nor Miss Stringer attempts the grand manner; their work is not scored for full orchestra, but in their very different styles they have provided chamber music of a refreshingly high order.

If Mr. Bevan's little collection contains fewer successes than the first two it is because his aims are more ambitious. All of the poems in *Dragon's Teeth* are deeply felt, but occasionally the tide of emotion breaks down the formal pattern, and the author lacks Mr. Petty's scrupulous regard for consistency of diction and imagery. Nevertheless, there are a number of wholly successful pieces here, and Mr. Bevan flavours his comments on man and the world he lives in with mordant wit and wry affection.

Mr. Corman's pamphlet reminds me of Coleridge's observation on certain writers "who mistake an intense desire to possess the reputation of poetic genius, for the actual powers, and original tendencies which constitute it". At his best his verses are undistinguished, and at his worst, not worth reading.

VERNON SCANNELL.

The Truth of Being: Margaret A. Wraith (Outposts Publication, 2s. 6d.).
The Poet's Hour: Arnold Vincent Bowen (Outposts Publications, 2s. 6d.).
Flesh, Fire and Folly: J. J. Hamilton (Outposts Publications, 2s. 6d.).
Moonrise: John Chappell (Outposts Publications, 2s. 6d.).
May to Midsummer: Alan Shaw (Outposts Publications, 2s. 6d.).

THE speculation that English poetry is suffering a decline is undeniably refuted by these recent additions to the *Outposts* series. In *The Truth of Being* Miss Margaret Wraith deals with her various problems efficiently. She exhibits a resilient technique compatible with both her short lyrical poems and her longer dramatic pieces. Easy variations of mood and subject, plus an astute perceptive sense, appear to be her principal poetic implements. Her poetic transgressions are few—occasionally she is guilty of slightly onerous lines and she has an inclination to over-dramatise when seeking effect. *The Truth of Being,* however, succeeds in numerous instances.

The Poet's Hour, by Arnold Vincent Bowen, bears upon it the unmistakable signature of the craftsman. Mr. Bowen utilises his obvious feeling for traditional poetry to substantial effect. Nearly all his poems are a subtle and pleasing blend of the past and the present. *November Leaves* begins :

> "As I stole forth this darksome morn
> Towards my factory forlorn,
> That makes a tomb of Bayswater,
> I heard a runnel music stir . . .".

Mr. Bowen is also capable of handling tender sentiments with delicacy. His imagery is never trite or oppressive, and his metres are always prudently chosen. Because there are so few ungraceful lapses in *The Poet's Hour,* Mr. Bowen should appeal to a wide public.

Mr. J. J. Hamilton, in his introductory poem, likens the contents of *Flesh, Fire and Folly* to old but comfortable clothes. "They have kindly respect for my infirmities", he says. Nevertheless, there is nothing frayed or unsafe about Mr. Hamilton's style ; nor is there any hint of the antique. He possesses an imagination which has an essentially modern function, and is best employed in such poems as *Espresso Bar:*

> "The harsh groove racks the tortured style,
> The drawn gas tubes cry out in pain".

This does not imply that the outlook of *Flesh, Fire and Folly* is limited. For his delineation of nature Mr. Hamilton has cultivated a sensitive and precise manner.

The poetry which Mr. John Chappell has mustered under the title of *Moonrise* appears to be largely experimental in character. The desire for experiment has, however, been intelligently applied. Mr. Chappell is not a demonstrative poet. He works quietly and never allows himself to become deluged by superfluous words. In fact, there are instances which indicate that he may be exercising just a little too much restraint in his choice of adjectives. Metrical flaws are seldom to be found, and the rare appearances of worn descriptive phrases do not distract one's attention from the genuine poetry in this booklet.

It is a harsh reasoning which requires the total success of every individual poem in a collection. Yet Mr. Alan Shaw's *May to Midsummer* approaches very near to the fulfilment of this demand. There is nothing esoteric about Mr. Shaw's work. His images are original and impressive in their simplicity, and statements are given validity by the use of keen eyes and ears. *Passover* ends with these lines :

> "On Saturday morning with bucket and stone
> The housewife strikes blood on the threshold,
> For deliverance from death and Monday's unknown".

May to Midsummer is the work of a true poet. Mr. Alan Shaw is to be congratulated.

JOHN E. CASPALL.

A Libation: Gael Turnbull (The Poet-Cameo Series, 2s.).
Promothea: Hyacinthe Hill (The Poet-Cameo Series, 2s.).
The Inner Surface: Peter Helm (Outposts Publications, 2s. 6d.).
Air on a Green Flute: Gordon Harris (Outposts Publications, 2s. 6d.).

DR. GAEL TURNBULL has already made one reputation in Canada and now slowly builds up another since his return to England. The worth of his finely-made poems, cut to the bone of image and meaning, should guarantee it; for here are a few specimens of the work of a poet who can keep his aesthetic distance from his subject without becoming detached from imaginative contemplation of it. Accuracy and evocation are second nature to him. In free verse his cadence is excellent and his fancy a pleasure : on the other hand his handling of a villanelle is something to be avoided.

Promothea is the first selection to be published here from the flowing variety of Hyacinthe Hill, the American poet and painter of "elemental kin". Her imagination must be similar, on a different plane, to that of Blake or Kit Smart: her imagery is decisive and immediate; her method is eclectic, precise, yet rapturous: the effect is exciting, clamorous, fascinating. Even the touch of naivety here and there adds colour and freshness. It is impossible not to be moved by Miss Hyacinthe Hill. It is time for a larger selection of her poems to be made available in this country.

"I paint the inner surface", says Peter Helm. "The bones of my head"—and it is true that all poetry, no matter how apparently transcendental, depends on conscious cerebration. Gordon Harris also is doubly concerned with the correct conscious expression of his thoughts. "Latch the window, lock the door", says Mr. Helm, "Let the external forces roar"; and Mr. Harris: "I'll wear no blame upon my name/For flogging a dead muse". Each surrounds himself with a choice of literary lares: with Mr. Helm there are David and Goliath, Blind Bartimaeus, Taliesin, Lydgate and Philoctetes; with Mr. Harris, Blake and Clare, ballads, Cezanne, and a mort of birds. Each locks himself in and strives to crystallize the mood: and each, in undisturbed study, is aware of the immense disturbances beyond the door. "And I was disillusioned early", says Mr. Harris; and Mr. Helm—

> "The art of life lies in retreating,
> In knowing what must be held and what
> Is no longer defensible".

Both these poets know what they want to say, and are mastering a way of saying it unequivocally. There are rich and moving poems in both selections. This world of stuttering cliches can do with more.

HUGH CREIGHTON HILL.

NOTICES

THE POETRY BOOK SOCIETY announces that its Summer Choice is *Visitations* by Louis MacNeice (Faber and Faber, 10s. 6d.). The Society's Summer Recommendations are *Poems of Many Years* by Edmund Blunden (Collins, 18s.) and *The Sense of Movement* by Thom Gunn (Faber and Faber, 10s. 6d.).

POEMS INVITED. A national magazine experimenting with the publication of poetry for the first time has given the Editor of *Outposts* the task of selecting suitable material. Payment is exceptionally good. Poems of not more than 20 lines, and having a direct impact upon the reader, should be sent (together with a stamped addressed envelope) to Howard Sergeant at the *Outposts* address.